

## Latinidad – 4/09: Poetry

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### BEFORE YOU SEND IT OUT

"Thanks for your good editing, suggestions and encouragement. I found a great agent, Claire Gerus, and she directed me immediately to Kaplan Publishing Co. and yesterday a signed contract came through with a nice little advance and a commitment to publish my book on juvenile justice early in 2011. Your suggestions and encouragement were invaluable."

--Juvenile Judge Irene Sullivan, author of *Tough and Tender: Juvenile Justice That Works for America's Troubled Kids*

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### 1. Saludos

Writing poetry makes you a better writer of novels, memoirs, and pretty much everything else. Poetry forces you to look at word choice in a way other genres (with the possible exception of scriptwriting) simply don't. Monica de la Torre, an intelligent, precise, and at times unexpectedly funny poet, juxtaposes words in a manner that both confounds and delights. Read this month's Q&A for further insight into a poet's particular relationship with language.

Helping Latino writers get published,

Marcela Landres

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<http://www.marcelalandres.com/>

### 2. Q&A

Monica de la Torre is the author of the poetry books *Talk Shows* (Switchback, 2007); *Acufenos*, published in 2006 in Mexico City by Taller Ditoria; and *Public Domain* (Roof Books, 2008). She is co-author of the artist book *Appendices, Illustrations & Notes*, available on Ubu.com and co-edited the multilingual anthology *Reversible Monuments: Contemporary Mexican Poetry* (Copper Canyon Press).

She is translator of a volume of selected poems by the acclaimed Mexican poet Gerardo Deniz (*Lost Roads*, 2000), and co-translator of *Mauve Sea-Orchids* by the Argentine poet Lila Zemborain (Belladonna Books, 2007). She is senior editor at BOMB Magazine.

Q: Which author or book inspires you, and why?

A: Every book that takes poetry or writing in a direction I hadn't imagined until I came across it inspires me. I'm interested in books that push the envelope, books that expand conventional definitions of what's possible in writing. I'm one of those people who need to read before they can write: my writing is always a palimpsest, a dialogue with other texts. Lately I've been obsessed with *La nueva novela* (1977) by the late Chilean poet Juan Luis Martinez: a patchwork of found visual and verbal texts as well as literary allusions that is so unconventional one can hardly call it a book of poems. Lately I've also been very inspired by plays by experimental playwrights: Mac Wellman and Richard Maxwell, for instance. The mechanics of plays are very appealing to me: they put language in action, language in them is really doing something. In poetry, this isn't always the case, but it's certainly my aim. A writer whose work never ceases to inspire me is the Brazilian Clarice Lispector: her writing seems so effortless, but then you realize every one of her decisions in writing multiplies the way a text can be read, there's a frightening intelligence to them. You can never be done reading her; her writing just keeps unfolding.

Q: You're the poetry editor at The Brooklyn Rail. How does your background as an editor influence your writing?

A: I'm actually senior editor at BOMB Magazine now. I've been here since October 2007. What being an editor has done for me is incalculable! I'm slightly less terrified of imperfection and mediocrity now. When it comes to writing there's nothing that can't be fixed. I'm longer cringe at the sight of the blank page.

At the Rail, I was only doing poetry: my mind doesn't do single-channel. I thrive on overstimulation. Working at BOMB has given me the opportunity to establish incredibly satisfying dialogues with a multitude of artists from a variety of different disciplines. I'm so fortunate.

Q: You've translated the work of Gerardo Deniz, among other Spanish-language poets. Does your work translating other writers shape your own writing?

A: Absolutely. I try not to do hack work. Have you noticed how bad writing is contagious? Sadly, this is not the case with good writing. Translation

is so intimate . . . if I translated poetry that I didn't aspire to being able to write myself, I'd feel like I'd be willingly infected by a noxious bug that would chip away at my ability to discern good from bad writing. I once got offered a lot of money to translate some trashy fiction into Spanish. I would have paid off my loans had I accepted.

Q: What is your writing ritual?

A: I wish I had a ritual! I don't. All I can say is that I write best when I'm waiting, when I'm forced to wait. It's about the only time I'm not rushing onto the next thing.

Q: Other than honing their craft, what advice would you give to Latino poets looking to be published?

A: Write the book that you're least expected to write.

### 3. Success Story

"Dear Marcela,

I took the liberty to post my book trailer on your Facebook profile because you helped make this happen. I read about the Chicano/Latino Literary Prize for Best Unpublished Novel and submitted the manuscript of *Meet Me Under the Ceiba*. Blessedly, it won the 2007 award. I knew the contest existed, but I had placed it out of my mind until *Latinidad* reminded me of the deadline. In October of this year *Meet Me Under the Ceiba* will be out with Arte Publico Press. Thank you so much for helping make this possible."

--Silvio Sirias, <http://www.silviosirias.com/>

### 4. Upcoming Workshops

WHAT:

Two workshops to be presented at the From Start to Sales V Writer's Conference sponsored by the University of New Mexico in conjunction with SouthWest Writers

#### 1st workshop - How Editors Think

Do you think editors spend their days reading manuscripts?

Think again! If you want to understand why editors choose to publish certain writers and reject the rest, learn how they think.

Topics discussed include: the three most common mistakes writers make when trying to get published; the two most important jobs of an editor (editing isn't one of them!); and the number one quality editors look for in a writer.

#### 2nd workshop - Publishing for Latinos

Finding the right publisher is difficult for any writer, but Latinos face unique challenges--and opportunities. Topics discussed include: the significance of Latinos to mainstream publishers; writing in Spanish vs. English; dealing with the label of "Latino Writer"; how to find a good agent and editor in a non-Latino industry; overcoming cultural and social barriers, especially for Latinas; and the most important thing you can do to ensure the future success of Latino publishing.

WHEN: Saturday, April 25

How Editor Think workshop - 1:15 p.m. to 2:15 p.m.

Publishing for Latinos workshop - 3:30 p.m. to 4:30 p.m.

WHERE: UNM Continuing Education, Albuquerque, NM

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Visit

<http://dce.unm.edu/writers-conference.htm>

Invite me to speak for your organization:

<http://www.marcelalandres.com/requestaworkshop.html>

List of upcoming workshops:

<http://www.marcelalandres.com/workshops.html>

## 5. Resources

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### HOW EDITORS THINK

"I read How Editors Think in one sitting and was engaged from beginning to end. It is well written, highly informative, and humorous—I found myself laughing out-loud in a few spots! Thanks for sharing the secrets of the trade."  
—Mayra Lazara Dole, author of Down to the Bone

Inspired by my experience as a former Simon & Schuster editor, How Editors Think: The Real Reason They Rejected You reveals what it really takes to get published. For more information, visit:

<http://www.marcelalandres.com/E-book.html>

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### INTERNATIONAL POETRY COMPETITION

Deadline: May 8

A prize of \$2009 and publication in Atlanta Review will be given for a single poem. For more information, visit <http://www.atlantareview.com/>

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### PENGUIN INVITATION TO BLOGGERS

Penguin Group USA is inviting bloggers to an online forum tentatively

scheduled for the week of April 20th to establish clearer ground rules for how they can best work with the blogging community and create direct lines of access to their marketing and publicity groups. For more information, visit <http://us.penguingroup.com/static/html/blogs/invitation-bloggers-get-know-penguin-publicity-marketing-groups>

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#### SELF-PUBLISHED COMPETITION

Deadline: May 1

Writer's Digest is searching for the best self-published books of the past few years. Grand prize includes \$3000. For more information, visit: <http://www.writersdigest.com/contests/>

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#### HISPANIC PANIC! 2

Date: May 27, 8 p.m., free, 21+

NOWHERE presents HISPANIC PANIC! 2, an evening with six LGBT Latino writers, bloggers and activists. Hosted by Charlie Vazquez and featuring Karen Jaime, Charles Rice-Gonzalez, Cristina Izaguirre, Larry La Fountain and Maegan La Mamita Mala Ortiz. NOWHERE is located at 322 E14th St (btwn 1st/2nd) in the East Village, NYC.

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#### WAG'S REVUE CONTEST

Deadline: May 31

Wag's Revue invites you to enter its inaugural contests in fiction, poetry, and creative nonfiction. First prize in each category receives \$500 and publication in Wag's Revue. For more information, please visit <http://www.wagsrevue.com/>

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#### WRITERS DIGEST SEEKS STUDENT BLOGGER

Deadline: July 1

The winner of the MFA Confidential Contest will receive his or her own addition to the close-knit Writers Digest family of blogs at [writersdigest.com](http://writersdigest.com). For more information, visit <http://www.writersdigest.com/mfacontest>

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#### WORKSHOP WITH LILIANA VALENZUELA

Dates: July 12-19

Liliana Valenzuela is one of the foremost English-to-Spanish translators in the word—a translator who is also, as author Cristina Garcia notes, a superb poet in her own right. Liliana's workshop will focus on the words that we use in our writing. "What is your particular linguistic treasure trove?" she asks. "How can you use it to enrich

your writing?" For more information, visit  
<http://www.centrum.org/writing/2008/12/boundless-curiosity-the-work-of-liliana-v\alenzuela-.html>

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#### BOMB MAGAZINE

Deadline: August 31

BOMB Magazine accepts unsolicited poetry and prose submissions for their literary pull-out First Proof by mail, from January 1 to August 31.

For more information, visit <http://www.bombsite.com/>

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#### LATINA VOICES SEEKS WRITERS

Teresa Puente, Columbia College Chicago journalism faculty member and editor and publisher of the web site Latina Voices, seeks writers of fiction and non-fiction. Latina Voices showcases stories by or about Hispanic women. For more information, visit <http://latina-voices.com>

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#### EXAMINER.COM SEEKS AUTHORS

Puerto Rican author Mayra Calvani is the new National Latino Books Examiner for Examiner.com. She'll be posting reviews, profiles, interviews, news, and events to promote the work of Latino authors in all genres. Visit her at

<http://www.examiner.com/x-6309-Latino-Books-Examiner> and subscribe to her posts. If you're a Hispanic author who'd like to be promoted, contact Mayra at [mayra.calvani@...](mailto:mayra.calvani@...)

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visit <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/marcelalandres/>

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"To have great poets there must be great audiences too."

--Walt Whitman

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